

REMARKS

In this Amendment, claims 1 and 13 have been amended, claims 2 and 15 have been canceled, and claims 23-34 have been added as new claims. Claims 7, 11, 12, 14, and 19-22 are withdrawn from consideration. Claims 1, 3-14, and 16-34 are pending after entry of this Amendment.

Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

No new matter has been added. Support amended claim 1 can be found at least in original claim 2 (now canceled) and at page 9, lines 10-13 of the originally-filed specification. Support for amended claim 13 can be found at least at original claim 15 (now canceled) and at page 9, lines 10-13 of the originally-filed specification. Support for new independent claim 23 can be found at least in original claims 1 and 9. Support for new independent claim 31 can be found at least in original claim 1 and at page 8, lines 11-19 of the originally-filed specification.

Rejection of Claims 1-6 and 8-10

Claims 1-6 and 8-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Buchanan (US 2004/0063663), Inoue (US 5,762,944), and Hughes (US 5,756,659).

Claim 1 has been amended to recite:

after the fluid has removed the impurity, exposing the fluid to a temperature equal to or greater than the boiling temperature of the fluid at ambient pressure prior to removing the fluid from the mixing apparatus.

The references cited fail to teach or suggest this limitation. The Examiner states that “Buchanan teaches that an extruder is kept at a temperature between 100-200 °C” and that “Such temperatures are greater than the boiling temperature of the solvents of Inoue at ambient pressure.” The Examiner concludes that **“the solvents of Inoue would have been exposed to a temperature greater than the boiling temperature at ambient pressure.”** Applicants respectfully disagree. Buchanan teaches that a carrier polymer is compounded with other substances “at a time and temperature suitable to promote mixing,” and “After mixing, the carrier polymer-inclusion complex composite is **rapidly cooled**” (para. 51). Importantly, neither

Buchanan nor Inoue teaches or suggests at what point of the process a solvent in Inoue might even be introduced. **Thus, neither Buchanan nor Inoue teach exposing a fluid to a temperature equal to or greater than the fluid boiling temperature at ambient pressure after the fluid has removed an impurity and prior to removing the fluid from a mixing apparatus.** Hughes fails to cure this deficiency of Buchanan and Inoue. Hughes teaches applying a vacuum so that “a stripping agent, unreacted monomer(s), residual solvent and residual thermally unstable species are partially devolitized” (col. 2, lines 60 – col. 3, line 9). However, there is no teaching or suggestion in Hughes of exposing the stripping agent to a temperature equal to or greater than its boiling temperature prior to removal of the stripping agent. Accordingly, amended claim 1 is patentably allowable over the combination of these references.

Claim 2 has been canceled, which renders its rejection moot.

Claims 3-6 and 8-10 depend from claim 1 and are patentably allowable for at least the same reason as claim 1.

Further in regard to claim 6, the combination of these references fail to teach or suggest the claimed limitation that “the fluid is of a type to physically entrap the impurity without dissolving the impurity.” The Examiner states that “Applicant teaches that water is a suitable ‘non-solvent’ for entrapping an impurity” and that “Inoue teaches that water is a suitable fluid.” The Examiner concludes that “using water as the particular fluid would have necessarily entrapped and removed some type of impurity.” However, Applicants also teach that water can be used to dissolve impurities (Application, page 8, lines 12-16). **Because water is a known solvent, using water for cleaning as disclosed in Inoue, without knowing the type of impurity being removed, would not necessarily “physically entrap the impurity without dissolving the impurity” as required by claim 6.** For this additional reason, the rejection of claim 6 is improper.

Rejection of Claims 13 and 15-18

Claims 13 and 15-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Buchanan, Inoue, and Hughes, as applied to claim 1, and further in view of Berg (EP 0623354).

Independent claim 13 has been amended to recite:

after the fluid has removed the impurity, exposing the fluid to a temperature equal to or greater than the boiling temperature of the fluid at ambient pressure prior to removing the fluid from the extruder.

As previously mentioned, neither Buchanan nor Inoue teach or suggest at what point of the Buchanan process a solvent in Inoue might even be introduced. Thus, neither Buchanan nor Inoue teach exposing a fluid to a temperature equal to or greater than the fluid boiling temperature at ambient pressure **after the fluid has removed an impurity and prior to removing the fluid from a mixing apparatus**. As indicated above, Hughes fails to cure this deficiency. Berg also fails to cure this deficiency. Accordingly, amended claim 13 is patentably allowable over the combination of Buchanan, Inoue, Hughes, and Berg.

Claim 15 has been canceled, which makes its rejection moot.

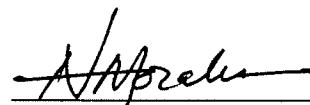
Claims 16-18 depend from claim 13 and are patentably allowable for at least the same reason as claim 13.

Conclusion

Examination and allowance of the claims is respectfully requested. If the Examiner has any questions or concerns, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (415) 393-9857.

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Respectfully submitted,



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